a plurality of sidebars,

each of said sidebars having an inner side and an outer side,

said inner sides defining an aperture,

said outer sides defining a chip-support zone,

said zone being smaller in each dimension than a corresponding dimension of the chip,

each sidebar having an upper chip-supporting surface for engaging the bottom surface of the chip.

A1

2. (Amended) The lead frame of claim 1, wherein said chip-supporting surface engages the bottom of the chip at a location remote from higher stress regions associated with corners of the chip.

A2

6. (Amended) The lead frame of claim 1, further comprising:

a plurality of support members having proximal and distal ends, each support member being connected to at least one sidebar by said proximal end thereof.

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8. (Amended) The lead frame of claim 7, further comprising:

A3

a plurality of support members having proximal and distal ends, each support member being connected to at least one sidebar by said proximal end thereof, defining a connection.

9. (Amended) The lead frame of claim 8, wherein each of said connections between each support member and the at least one sidebar is in the vicinity of a respective corner.

B2

13. (Amended) A lead frame for an integrated circuit chip having a frame-engaging bottom surface, comprising:

A4

a plurality of sidebars, each of said sidebars having an inner side and an outer side, said sidebars defining an aperture, said frame being sized to be accommodated entirely within corresponding outer edges of the circuit chip, each side bar having an upper chip-supporting surface for engaging the bottom surface of the chip.